**This I Believe**

June 1, 2014

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I remember it was 1996, I was a freshman, and the Internet was just becoming a part of our school community. Later databases were purchase for our library and we moved from a card to online catalog.

No one truly knew what any of it meant; how to integrate electronic resources into education? How quickly the Internet might grow? If the Internet should be seen as a toy or resource? Most of our teachers left it unused.

In the years since a few things have changed. We now know the Internet was not just a fad and I have a different relationship with online information; interacting with it regularly for entertainment, work, and personal inquiry. Digital literacy has since enriched my life, allowing me to explore information from a variety of sources and providing me with the ability to read and navigate information. In addition to helping me interact, create, and explore the world around me. This informational fluency means that I feel comfortable using a wide variety of media (e.g. photographs, paintings, maps, print materials, film, online databases, electronic tools, etc.) for personal and professional use.

Unfortunately, digital literacy is not something individuals learn simply through osmosis. As Renee Hobbs wrote in *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action* (2010), “To fulfill the promise of digital citizenship, Americans must acquire multimedia communication skills that include the ability to compose messages using language, graphic design, images, and sound, and know how to use these skills to engage in the civic life of their communities.” These acquired skills are vital to almost all members of our society. Their thoughtful incorporation into the curriculum can help to create the next generation of engaged, empowered, socially aware citizens.

To paraphrase something I said recently to my middle school Principal, “What it all comes down to is digital literacy is just literacy and you have to ask, ‘Do you want to provide your students with the literacy skills that they need? Or do you want them to go through life at a disadvantage?” For these reasons, and many more, I believe in the imperative and fundamental right to digital literacy curriculum.